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TRUMPET and FLAG

EDWARD SYDNEY TYLEE

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FROM

Ferris Greenslet.

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TRUMPET AND FLAG

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TRUMPET AND FLAG

AND OTHER POEMS OF WAR AND PEACE

BY

EDWARD SYDNEY TYLEE

LONDON & NEW YORK
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
1906

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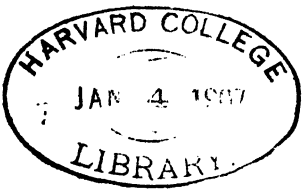

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PREFACE

THE best thanks of the Author are due to the Editors of the *Spectator*, *Speaker*, *Pilot*, *Daily News*, *Westminster Gazette*, and *Chambers' Journal*, for granting permission to reprint such of the following verses as have already appeared in those periodicals.

With regard to the poems on Paul Krüger and Czar Nicholas II., it should be noted that the former was first published before the outbreak of the South African War, and the latter shortly after the issue of the Peace Manifesto.

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TRUMPET AND FLAG

AFTER ELANDSLAAGTE

THE last bugle's dying echoes falter down the narrow valley
The doubtful battle tarried in so long:
As, turning from their headlong charge, the scattered horsemen rally,
The chiming rocks repeat that fading song.
From the heights where eagles hover, day-dark clefts the buck leap over,
The thousand giant voices of the crag
In reverberating chorus speed the musical, sonorous
Silver summons of the Trumpet to the Flag:
Awake! Awake! your splendid robe outshake!
Float proudly, lovely Sister, for your mighty brother's sake!

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The unanswered guns have spoken. We have
conquered; they are broken,
As the mists of morn before the morning
break.

With a mountain ash for neighbour, in a
chasm thunder-rifted,
Struck in sodden turf beneath a stormy sky,
Stands the Flag, round whose encumbered
staff the uncounted dead are drifted
Who died to set its haughty folds so high.
But she trails her drooping vesture with a
mourner's heedless gesture,
Murm'ring, "Yea, and should my broidered
skirts be spread?
When the children of my glory lie about me
rent and gory;
All the faithful ones that followed where I
led:
Alas! Alas! Their faces in the grass,
The breezes lift their draggled plumes,
to flout them, as they pass.
O thou cruel, mighty brother! Thou didst
cry them on each other,
With the breath that fills thy throat of
thrilling brass!"

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Then swift upon those tender tones of womanly compassion,
Like sword from sheath the ringing answer sped:
"Who shuns the kiss of steel shall meet his end in worser fashion,
A straw death, strangled slowly on his bed.
Let the fool, the slave, the coward, by ignoble fears devoured
Count each measured heart-beat, spare their hoarded breath!
Still the traitors shall be hunted by the fate they never fronted,
These Thy children shall not taste that second death.
Away! Away! to seek some noble fray,
From pleasant crimes of easy peace that soul and body slay;
From the sin that still deceives you, till the sated demon leaves you
And the clay-begotten brute goes back to clay."

He said, and with that loud last word a score of pipes set playing
To bid the victors close their ranks again.

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And growling, as old soldiers growl, but sulkily obeying,
The muttering drums took up a deep refrain.
While their banner in the vaward spread her wings to waft them forward,
By many a stubborn conflict rent and torn,
On an opal sky of even, till it vanished in clear heaven
To fresher fights by younger warriors borne.
And lone and chill the night wind swept the hill,
When o'er the yet unburied dead that strange dispute grew still,
The old feud, our kind inherit, 'twixt the warring soul and spirit,
Man's heart and man's indomitable will.

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THE DRUMMER

A BLOOD-RED battle sunset stains
The misty winter sky:
What spirit stirs within our veins
And lifts our hearts so high?
Gives youth no peace, gives age no sleep,
As they listen to the roll
Of the smitten parchment sounding deep
Its tocsin to the soul,
Rataplan!
Its restless rolling rude alarum to the listening soul?

For yester morn the folk that rid
Their thresholds from the snow,
Saw through the still streets ermine-hid
The dwarfish drummer go.
A war-worn ancient travel-stained,
Beating a weird tattoo,
Whose cunning lilt its hearers chained
And caught them ere they knew:
Rataplan!
That straight they sprang from shop and stall and followed, ere they knew.

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For here the blear-eyed smith forsook
His forge fire just aflame,
And from his leathern apron shook
The cinders as he came.
He left his clinking anvil dumb
On noisier business bound,
Shrill treble to the booming drum
His mighty blows resound :
Rataplan !
The clashing, clanging music of his mighty blows resound.

And there unwonted ardour lit
The trader's wrinkled face,
Till wondering neighbours saw him quit
The crowded market-place ;
The tinkle of his gathered pence
Forgotten, as he heard,
Athwart the rending veil of sense,
The tambour's master-word :
Rataplan !
In sudden stern staccato, the drum's imperious word.

Ere the slow priest his blessing said,
The bridegroom left the bride.

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The mourner left the cherished dead
His love had watched beside.
Pressed close and fast through lane and street
The ever-thickening throng,
All stepping to the measured beat
That marshalled them along:
Rataplan!
The teasing, tripping measure that led their lines along.

Red sunset shot with sanguine stains
A sword across the sky:
What sacred fever swells our veins,
And lifts our hearts so high?
Gives youth no peace, gives age no rest
That hears the throbbing roll
That knocks so hard against the breast
And shakes the hidden soul,—
Rataplan!
That strikes the heart within the breast, and wakes the sleeping soul!

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LORD ROBERTS

THY country called thee, from the grave
Of her dead child and thine,
The single warrior Fortune gave
To close a hero line.
O'er land and sea, from that far field
Where thy lost son was laid,
The sudden clarion summons pealed:
And straightway 'twas obeyed.

Because so well thy heart had learned
The soldier's simple creed,
And ne'er from iron Duty turned
A gentler voice to heed.
Her message to thy boyhood spoke
As clear, as stern, as now:
When from the Sepoy battery broke
Grim welcome to Lucknow.[1]

[1] Lieutenant Roberts was mentioned in despatches as having been "first among the guns" at Lucknow.

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How many a conflict, since, has left
Its furrow on thy face;
Where lines the strenuous years have cleft,
Their noble legend-trace!
The record of the hundred fights,
With little rest between,
The days of toil, the watchful nights
Those steadfast eyes have seen.

But Fate for later days reserved
A fiercer strife to wage;
When sons of those thy youth had served
Sought counsel of thine age.
Thou cam'st: the stubborn rebel quailed:
New hope our armies fired;
As India's sunburned veterans hailed
The captain they desired.

And if our England's heart be high,
Who, after long defeat,
Sees, with proud soul and kindling eye,
Her foemen at her feet:
Shall we, her sons, remember not
Our debt to him alone,
Who for her children's sake forgot
His mourning for his own?

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THE SALUTE

WITH clarion call of warning it roused the
laggard morning,
Its stormy summons rent the mists in twain;
As down the glimmering river with its glanc-
ing waves a-quiver
The stately ships stood outward to the main.
And above the battery lifted, where the
cannon smoke had drifted,
A cloudy pillar shook against the sun.
While from out that wavering column, in de-
liberate tones and solemn,
"Good-bye and God be with you!" said
the Gun.
"Farewell on your far faring!" roared
the Gun.

Beside that burly Titan I had watched the
grey dawn brighten
And golden billows flood the flaming sky.
Till by that vigil wearied, long hours that
trailed and tarried,
My jaded heart made petulant reply:

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"For all your useless clangour, your show of empty anger,
What part have you whose fighting days are done,
What portion or possession in all that fair procession?"
I cried, in scornful challenge to the Gun,
In mocking, scornful challenge to the Gun.

Then he to me defiant, like some easy-tempered giant,
Too cool and strong for pettier souls to fret:
"Discarded and disrated, of a form and type outdated,
Past work I am, but not past service yet.
Though guns of heavier metal resound in England's battle,
Still, still my tones proclaim her triumphs won,
Still greet her stately daughters as they pass on yonder waters,
And hail their flags returning," said the Gun,
"The stately ships returning," said the Gun.

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And you securely jesting at the worn-out
mastiff resting
Before the gate my faithful brothers keep ;
Were you so true a servant, of your master's
will observant,
The foe had never stolen on your sleep.
For you the kind Creator gave a harder task
and greater,
A knightly sword that noble deeds had done,
But you faltered and mistrusted, till the idle
sabre rusted
In the never empty scabbard ! " said
the Gun :
" Cold heart and coward spirit ! " growled
the Gun.

The day grew broad and splendid as the grim
old pedant ended,
A royal day for some great victory made.
And I left that ancient warder with his
brethren all in order
Along the cliffs in sombre menace laid.
And as down the glittering river, with its
burnished waves a-quiver,
The stately ships spread seaward one by
one,

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Like a mighty host retreating, colours high and
tambours beating,
Far down those shining reaches rang the
Gun;
The fading, far-off thunder of the Gun.

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WITHERINGTON AT COLENSO

(The following poem is founded on an incident related by the well-known war correspondent, Mr. Bennett Burleigh. At the battle of Colenso, a private soldier who had had both legs shattered by a shell, bandaged the crushed limbs with his putties, propped himself on a pile of pebbles, and continued firing till he was shot through the head by a Boer, who told the story to Mr. Burleigh.)

ALL day the ringing hills were loud
With leaping bolts of flame.
All day from out their smoky shroud
The incessant thunder came.
Till 'neath the slowly darkening skies
That hushed the storm of fight,
Shone radiant from a thousand eyes
The pity of the night:
O Day of pride and sorrow! O heavy, heavy night!

For broad the river ran and deep
Our warring hosts between.
And smitten from the embattled steep,
We fell by hands unseen.

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Their hidden batteries raked so well
Tugela's sullen flow;
That like the gulf 'twixt Heaven and Hell
It barred us from the foe:
A fordless, hopeless barrier, it barred us from the foe.

Until our ardent Irish threw
Their bodies in the flood,
And down its tawny current drew
A broader trail of blood,
As 'neath yon deadly hail they died,
With jest and laughter gay,
Soon hushed upon the swirling tide
That carried them away:
The swirling, strangling river that hurried them away.

But when the tide of battle swept
Back from that fatal plain,
A sorely wounded soldier crept
From forth a heap of slain.
The shell that burst his mates among
Had torn and mangled him;

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And lax at either knee there hung
A rent and useless limb :
At either knee hung useless a rent and shattered limb.

Yet though so stern a stroke and rude
His stalwart form had maimed,
He too was of the lion's brood,
Unconquered and untamed.
One joy, the greatest and the last,
His parting soul would know,
And ere upon the night it passed,
Would strike another blow ;
For duty and for England one final, crowning blow.

So from what scattered stones were there
He built a rugged pile,
A rampart and a couch to bear
His tortured frame awhile :
From his exhausted cartridge belt
The few last charges drew.
Nor wounds nor ebbing strength he felt
While still his fingers slew :
While still with failing fingers his country's foes he slew.

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And they that towards his stronghold
pressed,
Their flinching glances turned :
So awfully above its crest
His glaring eyeballs burned ;
For like the wounded lynx they glowed,
Guarding her children's bed.
And on his war-worn tunic showed
A broadening stain of red :
Upon his tattered tunic a broad and dreadful
red.

Till, when before him and behind
His foes had girt him round,
A sudden bullet swift and kind
His blackened forehead found.
And with his mighty arms flung wide
Athwart his rough stockade,
This son of England sank beside
The altar he had made,
The altar to her glory that his own hands had
made.

O God of Battles, at Thy feet
What awful wine is poured !
What firstfruits of untimely wheat,
The harvest of the sword.

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Thou mak'st the eagle and the dove
With one almighty breath ;
And bid'st us seek the shrine of Love
Within the courts of Death :
"Not peace, a sword I bring on Earth," the
Lord of Mercy saith.

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THE DESTROYER

A DWARFISH thing of steel and fire,
My iron nerves obey
The bidding of my crafty sire,
Who called me from the clay,
And sent me forth on paths untrod
To slay his puny clan,
A slave of hell, a scourge of God,—
For I was made by Man.

When foul fog curtains droop, and meet
Athwart an oily sea,
My rhythmic pulse begins to beat:
'Tis hunting time for me.
A breathing swell is hardly seen
To stir the emerald deep,
As through that ocean-jungle green
I, velvet-footed, creep.

And lo! my prey, a palace reared
Above an arsenal,
By lightning's viewless finger steered,
Comes on majestical.

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The mists before her bows dispart;
And through that Traitor's Gate,
The royal vessel, high of heart,
Sweeps onward to her fate:

Too confident of strength to heed
The menacing, faint sound,
When from their leash, like bloodhounds freed,
The snub torpedoes bound.
She does not note them quartering wide,
Nor guess what lip is this
That presses on her stately side
Its biting Judas-kiss.

Till, with a roar that frights the stars,
Her crashing timbers rend,
And lurid smoke and flaming spars
In one red storm ascend,
Whose booming thunder drowns the cries
Of thousand souls in pain;
Where, tossed on turbid waters, lies
My quarry torn in twain.

Awhile I watch her, half in fear:
There needs no second blow.
A full-gorged lynx that leaves the deer,
My hunger filled, I go.

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The stricken monarch may not mark
What foe her peace betrayed:
Swift as I issued from the dark,
I slink into the shade.

A will more strong than steel or fire
Controls my tigerish play;
My puny, hundred-handed sire,
Who dragged me forth from clay,
He too claims kindred with the clod,
Through some diviner plan;
Half imp of Hell, half child of God,
The Murder-Angel, Man.

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THE TORPEDO

By seven tall consorts circled round
The careless cruiser lay,
Watched by the dwarfish forts that crowned
The hills above the Bay—
The great guns frowning from the height:
The stately ships below—
And still towards them in the night
Came on the hidden foe.

For through the salt, sweet dark I crept,
Nigher and ever nigher;
Though round the restless searchlight swept
Its shifting fan of fire.
The sentries stared from ship and land:
Their eyes were strong and keen—
Too late the treacherous wave they scanned,
Where I had passed unseen.

Till, with a sudden awful roar,
Beneath their armoured keel,
As one might rend a scroll, I tore
That wall of tempered steel.

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Steel plate and oaken beam were cleft
By one fierce bolt of flame;
And through the gaping wound it left
The invading billow came.

And the great warship shuddering sprang
Even as the bison springs,
When to his throat with claw and fang
The thirsty leopard clings.
So did my noble quarry leap
Upon the seething wave;
Then headlong in the cloven deep
Plunged to her ocean grave.

The sea closed o'er her where she sank,
And not a bubbling breath
Told of the hundred souls that drank
The cup of bitter death.
The outer waters were not stirred,
Where, crouched beside his gun,
The foe that far-off thunder heard
And knew my task was done.

For to one cunning master true,
I serve and never tire.
Man's fingers made me, and I do
The bidding of my sire.

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He speeds me o'er the midnight wave:
And on that path untrod,
The slave of His more mighty slave,
I work the will of God.

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COLONEL BADEN-POWELL: THE STORY OF A HERO

ONE word of this weary war
All our hearts are waiting for,
Of the hero England bore,
Kind and gay:
The soul so calm whate'er befalls it,
For no peril yet appals it;
And his ceaseless toil, he calls it
Holiday.

Half an endless year ago
He was left amidst the foe,
With some thousand men or so,
As their chief.
For his country's arms miscarried,
And across the desert arid
Many a tedious noonday tarried
The relief.

But he knew his masters well;
And not fortune, nor Pall Mall,
That is paven smooth as Hell,
No man's word

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Trusted he, but God Who made him,
And his own good sword, to aid him;
And the soldiers that obeyed him
Like his sword.

"Lo, what pigmy band, at bay
On its ant-hill, bars our way?
These our guns shall sweep away
In a trice."
So the scornful Dutchmen vaunted:
But their braggart humour scanted,
When that gallant troop undaunted
Foiled them thrice.

Came and went the Christmas feast,
Yet the fight nor stayed nor ceased,
Still the swarming foe increased;
Help delayed.
And the great siege guns came, shelling
Spitfire fort and harmless dwelling,
Young and old at random felling,
Man and maid.

See our English Greatheart then,
How he moved among his men,
Gave each soul the strength of ten,
Cheered and fired!

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Till the famine-stricken, meagre
Captives of that iron leaguer,
As their colonel's self grew eager,
Hope-inspired.

So, all hearts are longing for
Tidings from the weary war,
Of the hero England bore,
Kind and gay:
The soul so calm whate'er befalls it,
For no peril yet appals it;
In his country's cause he calls it
Holiday.

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THE BELLS OF MAFEKING

RING out from all your rocking spires:
Let tower to tower repeat
The news that lights the festal fires
Along the crowded street!
A bright new word your voices say;
For Mahon's in Mafeking!
And every boy's a man to-day,
And every man a king.

Lo, from that once beleaguered gate
The haggard warriors throng
To greet the help that comes so late,
And mocked their hope so long.
Till England's well-nigh forfeit pledge
Her tarrying sons redeemed.
And on the desert's quivering edge
The foremost lances gleamed.

How wildly throbs each soldier's breast!
How kindles every eye!
As in their tattered garments drest
The garrison go by!

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Hark! from a thousand manly throats
The brave salute the brave,
And o'er their heads the banner floats
Their brothers died to save.

For these our English Spartans are,
These men of dauntless cheer!
And khaki-clad for dusty war
Leonidas is here:
Who faced the hunters undismayed,
And swept his pathway free,
And of a fenceless village made
His new Thermopylæ.

So clang it from your rocking spires,
Let tower to tower repeat
The news that lights the festal fires
Along the crowded street!
A bright new word your voices say;
For Mahon's in Mafeking!
And every boy's a man to-day,
And every man a king!

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LIGHT CAVALRY

THE desert sun our brows hath branded,
The dust of the desert our harness sanded:
Grey wolves of war and tough ox leather
Grown old in our country's cause together.
Nor gold nor gear our belts encumber;
Yet sweet and short is his nightly slumber,
Who sleeps with his tethered steed for neighbour,
With loaded rifle and girded sabre!
Boot and saddle, sword and gun,
They spoil a man or they make him one!
Lion-Heart and Eagle Eye,
Come, be our comrade to live and die!

How long it seems since fortune reft them;
The loves we loved so well we left them:
Home, and hearth, and our sweethearts' faces.
And who sit now in our ancient places?
Well, fare they well with their new masters!
We can smile at our own disasters;

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Smile and jest at our own undoing,
And sing to the tune of the drum's tattooing:
Boot and saddle, sword and gun,
They spoil a man or they make him one!
Lion-Heart and Eagle Eye,
Come, be our comrade to live and die!

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AFTER VEREENIGING

We proved you first by steel and fire;
And fire and steel have found you true!
Our stubborn patience did not tire
Till all our brother's heart we knew.
But three long years of battle leave
The greater, nobler task undone:
The gentle hands of Peace must weave
Our warring nations into one.

We heard your voices in the hail
That lashed Tugela's red ravine,
When 'mid the white smoke's shifting veil
The flashes of your guns were seen.
Then through that shuddering grey eclipse,
And borne on leaping tongues of flame,
From the ranged cannons' awful lips
Our brothers' stormy greeting came.

How far and how unreal seems
The tale of that December day!
Dim as a sick man's troubled dreams
The cheerful morning sweeps away.

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Swift, as of old, Tugela flows,
But now with unpolluted tide;
And calm and green the valley shows
Where our devoted heroes died.

So from our chastened hearts, at last,
The hates we deemed immortal fade;
And from the struggles of the past
Our future friendship shall be made—
Till peace with gentle fingers end
The task rough-handed War begun;
And years of mutual service blend
Our kindred races into one.

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SEVEN RULERS OF MEN

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BISMARCK

THY Mother follows thee to rest
With haughty, tearless eye;
Who wert the buckler to her breast,
The sword upon her thigh.
Through stormy youth, through stressful age,
Her chronicles have shown
Two stories on a single page:
Thy country's, and thine own.

A dark but splendid record stained
With oozings, not of wine.
Man must have gods, or true or feigned;
And Germany was thine.
Though in that sacred cause, good sooth!
Strange deeds thou dared'st at times:
We set thy loyalty and truth
Against a hundred crimes.

Among the wise we saw thee sit,
Their easy master still.
In vain they brought their subtle wit
To match thine iron will.

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Each empty brag, each ready lie
The attentive warrior heard :
Then smiled, with cool, contemptuous eye ;
And crushed them with a word.

For Fortune saw thee Roman-browed ;
Invulnerable, austere :
And loved the soul that never bowed
For grace, or bent for fear.
Thrice at her gates thou didst desire
An oracle of flame ;
And thrice from out that shrine of fire
The expected answer came.

Till on yon heights above Belleville
Thou stood'st, when Paris burned,
And 'neath thy charger's armoured heel
The flying cinder spurned.
While near upon that ardent sod,
Thin-faced, emaciate,
By thee, who stood'st so like a god,
Stood Moltke like a Fate.

. . . . . .

So, guard him, guard him home to rest,
O Mother eagle-eyed !
He was the buckler to thy breast,
The sword against thy side.

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But rear no pile with hireling hands,
Of bronze or sculptured stone!
One temple to his memory stands:
'Twas builded by his own.

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PAUL KRÜGER

(1899)

DEEP, mournful eyes that seek the ground,
Their devious path to trace.
The giant form of Lincoln crowned
By Cromwell's grosser face.
Coarse, rustic garb, of uncouth cut,
That masks the mighty limb,
Its awkward folds the ready butt
Of Europe's jesters trim.

So much the crowd may see; the rest
Asks critics clearer-eyed.
So rough a scabbard leaves unguessed
How keen the blade inside;
The trenchant will, the subtle brain,
So strangely doomed to wage
With climbing Fate's resistless main
The hopeless war of age.

His kindred are a rugged brood
That nurse a dying fire:
The sons of Calvin's bitter mood
And sterner than their sire.

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By faith through trackless deserts steered,
Lost miles of lonely sand,
Far from the intruding world they feared,
They sought their Promised Land.

By such grim guardians tutored well,
His Spartan childhood grew.
The wind-trail of the fleet gazelle,
The lion's path he knew.
The camp surprised at dawn ; the rush
Of feet, the crackling smoke ;
When on the sleeping laager's hush
The sudden Kaffir broke.

Nay once, 'tis said, when Vaal in flood
Had barred the hunter's way ;
And mid its swollen current stood
A wounded buck at bay ;
While some before the brute drew back,
And some before the wave,
Striding that torrent's foaming track
The mercy-stroke he gave.

A stream more rapid and more wide
His strength has stemmed since then :
Called from the plodding team, to guide
The starker wills of men.

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Chance-prenticed to so new a trade,
Unlettered and unschooled,
The clod-bred clownish peasant made,
No less, a realm, and ruled.

Yet though that realm he still maintains
Against an Empire's might,
And with untiring skill sustains
The so unequal fight,
He buys his victories all too dear
Whose foes have Time for friend;
Each fatal triumph brings more near
The inevitable end.

Haply, the hoarse voiced guns must close
The long debate at last;
Ere the young Future can compose
Its quarrel with the Past.
Natheless our England, unashamed,
May greet a foeman true,
Of her own stubborn metal framed:
For She is iron too.

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LEO XIII

KIND eyes that with a flame so pure
From those thin temples glow,
We gaze with growing awe, unsure
If this be man or no.
For Time, that breaks the body frail,
Adorns it and refines;
And through the form's transparent veil
A heavenly spirit shines.

How should an English pen essay
In alien verse to paint
This Anselm of a later day,
Scholar and priest and saint?
Yet even the soul's aloofness serves
To make the sight more clear:
Lost are St. Peter's soaring curves
To him who stands too near.

See with a father's tenderness
His reverend figure stand,
The toiling, struggling world to bless
With raised, majestic hand.

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But that benignant purpose still
Those priestly robes impede;
As round the gesture of his will
Clings his restraining creed.

For ne'er was prejudice so blind
To keener wit allied,
Or such a narrow faith combined
With sympathies so wide.
No newer truths his eyes discern
Whose glances backward cast,
Still from the beckoning Future turn
To the forgetful Past.

Or why these busy throngs that crowd
The Papal Court to-day?
These murmurs of a palace proud;
This show of temporal sway.
These guards, half soldier and half page,
Round an unmenaced throne,
The trappings of a vanished age
Transmitted to our own.

So to a shadowy sceptre he
With pious fervour clings.
The greatest of earth's priests would be
The pettiest of her kings.

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Would Rome's lost empire o'er mankind
In pristine might restore;
And to her outworn system bind
Our restless souls once more.

Ah! not even those deft fingers shall
Re-knit that broken chain,
Or to the abandoned prison call
The truants back again.
Not Anselm's nor Aquinas' plan
Our perfect rule may be.
The Almighty Power that fashioned man,
Made him, and left him, free.

Free, but of creatures most forlorn,
As our sad hearts know well.
For he that is of woman born
Must bow to Mary's spell.
Lo, in immortal beauty smiles
The Virgin Mother sweet,
And with a gentle magic wiles
The nations to her feet.

But Thou, by many a doubt cast down,
Who for such peace may'st sigh,
Who tired of Reason's thorny crown,
Would lay that burden by:

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Since even to the bravest heart
The coward moment comes;
When he, whose earlier hopes depart,
Faints, and almost succumbs.

Go Thou where Rhone's impetuous wave
Girdles her slopes of pine,
Where rest the saints who died to save
The faith Thou would'st resign.
Hark! what indomitable psalm
Yon Vaudois valley fills!
Auvergne has heard its measure calm;
And Scotland's storm-swept hills.

Exiles of Truth, they 'counted nought
The power, the pride of Rome;
And in the trackless desert sought
An altar and a home.
Theirs the poor chapel rude and bare,
Or the uncovered sod:
Enough, if thence their secret prayer
Went freely up to God.

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TUEN:
EMPRESS-DOWAGER OF CHINA

We know the East's fantastic art!
  But what dim courts are these
Where no intruding breezes part
  The silken tapestries,
Upon whose strange and gorgeous weft
  Mid intricate designs
Inwrought by myriad fingers deft,
  The Golden Dragon shines?

And lo! beneath that splendid pall,
  Where but to breathe is death,
The Imperial termagant we call
  The new Elizabeth!
For while more wide her borders are
  Than those of our great Queen,
A tale more wonderful by far
  Her life, erewhile has been.

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Yet, called by fortune to a place
To which she was not born,
Full oft, methinks, her thoughts retrace
Her infancy forlorn :
The wattled hovel, bare and rude,
In the dull Mongol plain,
And years of childish servitude
In want and toil and pain.

Until some noble's wandering glance
Her growing beauty caught,
Who by divinely ordered chance
The little maiden bought :
Nor dreamed that, when his languid mind
Chose the slight, fair-haired slave,
He to the third part of mankind
Their future mistress gave.

See, underneath each drooping lid
The inscrutable grey eyes,
Within whose changing shadows hid
So swift a spirit lies !
The lips that with their ready jest
Part in so bright a smile,
Disarming even the foes that best
Perceive their lurking guile.

Digitized by Google

For still of those forgotten days
The enduring prints remain,
The soul long bowed to menial ways
Keeps its old servile stain.
Still doth her cautious speech conceal
The thought it seems to tell:
Ruled by that will of tempered steel
Which serves her people well.

Since, by the irony of fate,
In those small hands are set
The keys of Asia's Eastern gate
That stands unbroken yet:
Though Europe's hosts beleaguer it
And fain its wealth would spoil:
But that fine brain and subtle wit
Makes light of all their toil.

She knows what secret feuds divide
The councils of her foes;
What selfish aims their leaders guide
To separate ends, she knows.
And with surrenders ably feigned
Resistless force doth meet,
Indifferent, so her point be gained,
To nominal defeat.

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For here the Spirit of the Past,
Of coming change afraid,
In China's ancient land its last
And greatest stronghold made.
And here, if Heaven our cause befriend,
Must the last fight be won,
And the slow march of progress end
Where 'twas, long since, begun.

Unless from yon mysterious realm
Some second Tamerlane
With his uncounted hordes o'erwhelm
Our Western world again;
And from its trampled fields erase
All fruit our labour bore,
And tread our just emerging race
Into the brute once more.

But these are idle questionings,
While towards our darkness drawn
Onwards, with tireless pinion, wings
The Angel of the Dawn;
And in the vast and shadowy fold
That veils his mighty breast,
In sunrise robes of pearl and gold
The future lies at rest.

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NICHOLAS II

THE double eagle of thy crest
Looks either way for sign
The empires of the East and West,
Past and To-come, are Thine.
To thee their hundred millions bow,
Whom next to God they fear.
But He is very far, and Thou
Most awful and most near.

A haughty claim, which, truth to tell,
Yon gentle face belies.
No lowering threat of knout or cell
Dwells in those dreaming eyes.
A poet this, whom Fate's caprice
Earth's proudest monarch made.
A mild-voiced angel preaching peace,
Though girt with Michael's blade.

When such a voice a truce declares,
What power should cross his will?
No less, o'erburdened Europe wears
Her heavy armour still.

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And borne on all the winds that blow,
  And gay with flaunted death,
A hundred swaying banners go,
  Their silent hosts beneath.

For though we know thee high of heart,
  Stern-willed, and ardent-souled,
Captive of giant powers thou art,
  Too mighty for thy hold.
Slowly the enormous glacier moves,
  But with resistless force,
And grinding through its rocky grooves
  Or finds or makes a course.

Even with like slow, deliberate pace
  Hath Russia's empire grown,
Even so her noiseless steps erase
  All landmarks but her own.
Trace the dark story of her kings!
  Her sombre annals read!
And see what bitter harvest springs
  From slavery's poisoned seed.

See where 'twixt loathing and desire
  The Imperial wanton stands,
To watch her strangled lord expire
  In Orloff's savage hands!

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See Peter living fountains quaff
To slake his tiger-mood :
Or Ivan's iron-pointed staff,
Wet with his first-born's blood !

So the long tale of crime and fraud
Goes on from age to age :
No record here but bears one broad
Red smear across the page :
To those last, fatal lines that tell,
In letters yet undried,
How slain by those he loved too well
Thy noble grandsire died.

For only Freedom's self can trust
Her subjects to be free.
Who rules besotted natures must
Or King or martyr be.
So fierce a child Oppression bore,
The startled sire afraid,
Recoiled, like Frankenstein, before
The monster that he made.

And shall thy single life redeem
That heritage of hate ;
Or one weak arm turn back the stream,
The hurrying stream of Fate ?

Digitized by Google

Shall man lay down the useless steel,
And all the conflicts cease,
And our disbanded warriors kneel
Before the Prince of Peace ?

Ah ! little of the way they note,
Nor what its perils are,
Who towards a Bethlehem so remote
Follow so faint a star.
To us, on nearer journeyings set,
A hopeless quest it seems,
A breath, a dream perhaps, and yet—
Who doth not love such dreams ?

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EMILE LOUBET

O'ER thee no eagle spreads her vanes
The idle crowd to awe,
The true Imperial bird, that reigns
By right of beak and claw.
No hero nor no king in thee
Thy shallow brethren know;
Only a grave, grey man they see,
And a silk scarf or so.

Look closer, for yon bearded mouth
Is set with certain lines,
Where the swift spirit of the South
With Northern strength combines.
Yea, strong and subtle, swift and cool
Should be his soul indeed,
Whom France's voice elects to rule
Her changeful, changeless breed.

For when, so lately, sick to death
Our third Republic seemed,
And some who watched her labouring breath
Of coming triumph dreamed;

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When Prince and scheming soldier leagued,
Sworn foe with doubtful friend,
Around her restless couch intrigued
Expectant of her end :

Then thou, by peril undismayed,
Unawed by clamour came ;
Whom every jarring sect obeyed,
But whom no sect could claim.
To power's unerring touchstone brought
Thy tempered will rang true.
For France had found the man she sought,
And found a master too.

So twixt thy fellows' threatening swords
Thou stepped'st, with harmless guile,
The grace of tactful deeds, the words
That heal and reconcile :
With the same selfless spirit filled
That lived in Lamartine ;
Like his, unwearied and unchilled,
Thy faith, thy hope have been.

Though not in those calm eyes we mark
His heaven-born genius shine ;
The incommunicable spark,
Original, divine :

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Thou also from immortal urns
Hast borrowed sacred fires ;
Whose soul with Duty's ardour burns,
And whom her voice inspires.

And by her ancient hearthstone set,
And nursed upon her knees,
France numbers many children yet
As pure and brave as these.
Therefore her spirit undecayed
Falls but to rise again :
Oft pierced, oft wounded, oft betrayed,
But never wholly slain.

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CECIL RHODES

ELSEWHERE, the impartial wings of time
Sad-vestured autumn bring.
Only in Oxford's happy clime
Reigns an unfading spring.
Youth with its own immortal gifts,
High hopes and splendid dreams,
Makes glad her reverend streets, and drifts
On her enchanted streams.

There, when his manhood ripened first,
The great Adventurer,
Last of our Empire-builders, nursed
His filial love for her.
Thither, when on his heart he knew
Death's chilly finger laid,
As close the eternal curtains drew,
His dying fancies strayed.

Far other sights his prime had seen
In those lost solitudes
Where yonder swarthy desert Queen
On her hid treasure broods.

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Not now towards Bethlehem's tiny fold
Our modern Magi turn.
Still over Ophir's cradled gold
Their chosen planets burn.

Lands by no white man's foot defiled:
The cloudless Southern skies:
Where in the just discovered wild
The sudden cities rise.
Where in an hour the canvas town
Round the new shaft is spread:
Life in full torrent roaring down
Her lately cloven bed.

There, almost in primeval strength,
The full-fed passions bloom,
Where giant instincts find at length
Full scope and ample room.
Where gamblers on a single throw
Life, honour, fortune lay:
The pauper of a while ago
A king of men to-day.

So to the arena void and vast
Of that unbroken land,
He came, the strong man armed, and cast
His rivals on the sand.

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Yet though of such base conflict doomed
The lifelong slave to be,
Beneath the mask his soul assumed
A voiceless poet he.

Still haunted by one mighty thought;
Of yon dark gate unsealed;
The secret Cæsar vainly sought
To all men's eyes revealed.
When from Cape Town to Ramleh mouth
The iron highways meet,
And all the riches of the south
Are laid at England's feet.

With such a glorious end to gain
No means unlawful seemed,
All paths permitted, to attain
The goal of which he dreamed.
For those dark eyes ne'er saw in life
Essential good or ill;
But blind, material force at strife
With his despotic will.

So 'twixt a midnight and a morn
Came that ill-omened Raid,
Which to her foe's triumphant scorn
His country's fame betrayed.

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They who God's purposes would serve,
But not await His time,
From their self-chosen pathway swerve
Into unconscious crime.

Still may we praise the intrepid breast,
So English and so gay,
To whom privation was a jest,
And danger, holiday.
In whose impetuous strength we saw
A greater yet survive :
The reckless soul that brooked no law,
The undaunted heart of Clive.

His labour's heritage is thine,
City of Splendid Dreams !
Whose fairy towers of sunset shine
Beside the enchanted streams.
Though fate denied him evermore
Thy pleasant streets to see ;
Thou knowest, at last, what love he bore
To England and to Thee !

So peace and quiet rest to him ;
Where from aerial flight
The questing vulture stoops to skim
Matoppo's lonely height.

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There many a weeping night shall shed
  Her tears of dewy balm,
Under the wide star spaces spread
  In everlasting calm.

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MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

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THE ICEBERG

THE Aurora decks my brow with flame;
Rose-red my crystals burn.
Out of the eternal deep I came,
And to the deep return.
Borne of the herald winds I go:
The trumpets of the desert blow
And round my breast I wear the mantle of the snow.

Yet by the Polar moonbeams kissed
A statelier robe is mine.
The silken raiment of the mist
Enshrouds me for a sign.
I am the eldest child of Death,
As that pale vesture witnesseth:
The unresting wave grows still before my frozen breast.

And landsmen, far on Norway's coast,
Have seen my pinions white,
And wondering asked what strange sea-ghost
Went by them in the night:

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As down those racing tides I fled,
A spectre from a world more dread,
Darkening a thousand stars with my tremendous head.

Sometimes to my forlorn domain
There comes a lonely sail:
The rangers of the untravelled main,
Who follow the great whale.
When the grey fog lies dank and cold,
Along a slumbering ocean rolled,
Into its shades they steer, with jocund hearts and bold.

Till breaking through that fatal veil
Athwart their bows I loom.
And the wind leaves their drooping sail
Beneath the impending Doom.
Even as the parted mists reveal
The foe their wavering folds conceal,
My ponderous bulk descends upon their shattered keel.

With crash of many a rending beam,
And shriek of drowning men,
As the green billow's stifling stream
Floods the forecastle's pen.

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While I, an ignorant soul and blind,
Mute slave of some diviner mind,
Leave my yet gasping prey, nor cast one glance behind.

Still southward, ever southward, pressed,
By hurrying currents driven;
Till on serener seas I rest
Beneath a bluer heaven.
And as a guilty spirit dies
Before our Lord's accusing eyes,
Into the wave I sink, watched by those cloudless skies.

Digitized by Google

THE MOUNTAIN

I HOLD above a careless land
The menace of the skies;
And in the hollow of my hand
The sleeping tempest lies.
Mine is the promise of the morn,
The triumph of the day.
And parting sunset's beams forlorn
Upon my heights delay:
There longest, loveliest rests each fleeting, fading ray.

Many a little blue-eyed lake
Around my footstool sleeps.
Above, a thousand torrents break
From purple shadowed steeps,
And foaming down my rugged side
With shouts of baby glee,
They hurry to yon scarce descried
Far-off, faint-calling sea;
And mix their tiny rills with its immensity.

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But ah! the beauty of the night!
The silver silent hills!
When billowy vapour ghostly white
The nearer valley fills.
And rising from that grey lagoon,
Each bare and flinty spire
Lifts its wan forehead to the moon
That smit' with like desire,
Kisses its pallid brow, and crowns with fairy fire.

The mountain goats securely leap
About my perilous ways.
There sometimes a bewildered sheep
From safer pastures strays.
Whom faint from devious wanderings
The questing raven spies;
And blinds her with a whirr of wings,
And frights with savage cries;
Till in some lost ravine the unhappy truant lies.

And awful is my giant form
When midnight winds awake,
And 'neath the chariot of the storm
My darkened ridges shake.

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They shake, they bow before his wrath;
The groaning forest bends;
The rocks are cloven in his path;
The eternal granite rends;
And through the rift it made the thunderbolt descends.

With rush of blinding showers that sweep
The stars out of the sky;
With spirit voices chanting deep
The heavy night goes by.
Till, glad as he who wakes at last
From demon-haunted dreams,
When all those clamorous hours are past,
The joyous morning beams:
And from my swollen falls a living rainbow gleams.

In chattering swarms the starlings crowd:
The eagle is alone.
Remote I dwell behind the cloud
That veils my rocky throne.
Thence, as the circling seasons fleet
On swift and silent wing,
I watch unwearied earth repeat
The miracle of spring;
And o'er my barren slopes a flowery mantle fling.

Digitized by Google

And they who from your towns are led
To seek my solitude,
Their souls by angel hands are fed,
And with immortal food.
For though my chaste, unbruised breasts
Nor wine nor honey yield;
Yet whoso in their shadow rests
With heart and eyes unsealed:
To him my tale is told, my secret charm revealed.

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BALLIOL COLLEGE CHAPEL

SUNSET ; and showering down in glittering rain
Jewel on jewel : amber, amethyst,
With beryl mixed ; while, through one stainless pane,
The untarnished evening floats in golden mist.

The echoing murmur of the chanted psalm
Has ceased at length, and a deep hush succeeds.
In level tones, smooth, passionless, and calm,
A Scholar the appointed Scripture reads.

And there is rest, not peace : unquiet souls
By this cool hour not so much soothed as stilled.
Here in full flood the tide of manhood rolls,
Its force unspent, its ardour yet unchilled.

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Not peace, but rest: a moment's breathing-space,
With nerves still quivering from the intenser strain,
They stand, these runners of a noble race,
Ere springing forward on the track again.

For these, like that young poet long ago,
Whom sleeping, France's Princess found so fair
She kissed him with a kiss as pure as snow;
These Truth hath seen and chosen unaware.

And they awake, and join the accustomed strife,
Their brows unbranded by that lip of flame;
And seek to live the world's unconscious life,
Like others; but they are no more the same.

For all those meaner lures that take the crowd,
And such light loves as perish in their birth,
Have lost their magic for these dreamers, vowed
Henceforward to a service not of earth.

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One hope is iron in their blood, one form
Shines out before, above them ; as a star
Now hid by clouds, now lost in sudden storm,
Emerges in clear heaven, serene and far.

So, scarce they mark the roughness of the way,
And poisonous marshes of their life's low land ;
Its toilsome heights where many lions stray ;
Its red, interminable wastes of sand.

Ah ! not in vain the unceasing, lifelong quest
Of dauntless hearts that sicken, but endure.
Nor count him hapless, whose unshrinking breast
Keeps to the end its young ideal pure.

Till She, who fled him while he followed her,
Hearing, behind, those stumbling footsteps fail,
Turn back to meet her dying worshipper,
And from her glorious eyes withdraw the veil.

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THE SWIMMER

A SINEWY youth, bull-necked, bold-eyed,
Was cleaving crystal Seine;
Ere yet its unpolluted tide
Had caught the city stain.
Swiftly the limpid current flowed,
And sweet with hawthorn bowers,
Where dark against the sunset showed
A ring of fortress towers.

Thereat the swimmer, half in sport,
A furious gesture made:
"A curse upon the dingy fort
That casts so dark a shade!
By every stone in yonder walls
And Louis' heart, I swear,
The day that old rat's-castle falls
I'll be the foremost there."

He spake, and from the rapid stream,
A dripping athlete, rose;
And glittering in the western gleam
Did on his thread-bare clothes;

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One careless, scornful pebble cast
At the grim sentinel:
Laughed as the fellow scowled; and passed,
Ere the first shadows fell.

And that was Danton. Many a May
The hawthorn thickets stirred:
Till on a certain summer day
He kept his boyish word.
Then with all Paris at his heel
The burly tribune came;
And tower by tower the tall Bastille
Sank in a sea of flame.

Enough! his triumphs and his crimes
Our children's primers tell.
For, thrown by Fate on violent times,
He learned their ways too well.
Five years his meteor spirit blazed
Those darkened heavens through:
Then perished, in the storm he raised,
And by the sword he drew.

For "Blighted be my name," he cried,
"If only France be free."
So let the land for which he died
His constant mourner be.

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And should her graceless sons forget
The sacred trust they hold,
God send she find a Danton yet
As stubborn and as bold.

Digitized by Google

FANTASIA

(On an Air from Rossetti)

Oh ! let my tired head
Feel the motion of your breast ;
As the fisher in his bark
Feels the heaving of the sea.
But there its throbbing woe
Finds a far securer rest ;
For there no storms resort,
No winds bewilder me.

Then let me faintly hear
Thy sweet lips break into song ;
As the fisher hears the wave
Break in music on the shore.
And while thy lovelocks hang
Like the sunbeams bright and long ;
With trails of gleaming silk
Mine eyes are covered o'er.

The golden curtains close.
Around me lies the court.
On rosy wreaths I lie ;
White lilies kiss my hand ;

Digitized by Google

And maidens tender-faced,
Swift as swallows, flit and sport.
For time and tide are dead,
And this is Fairyland.

Digitized by Google

A KERRY STAG

He bounded from the ferny bed
Where all the scented night he lay,
And on the track of sunrise sped
In haste to greet the coming day.
The branching heather hardly bent
Her blooms beneath his flying feet,
As forth upon the wind he went
With steps as silent and as fleet.

Till on Cairn Tual's summit bare
He rested with the world below;
And saw the clouds his shoulders wear
With the first fires of welcome glow.
While all the armies of the morn
Their crimson banners forward flung,
And in the starless west forlorn
A single splendid planet hung.

And ever broader grew the light,
Though still the deeper valleys slept.
Round the last strongholds of the night
The mist's fantastic warriors crept,

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Till Turk to Tomies called : and straight
Their ridges flushed with rosy flame ;
And through the mountains' eastern gate
Smiling the royal morning came.

Far off he saw the haunted seas,
The wave-tormented Kerry shore ;
And to his eager ear the breeze
The long Atlantic thunder bore.
Then eastward roamed his glance again,
Where fairer, wider vales expand,
And blue Killarney's sapphire chain
Leads, lake on lake, to Fairyland.

A shadow darkened overhead :
And black against that golden sky,
With shining pinions idly spread
A basking eagle floated by.
With haughty gaze the desert king
The tyrant of the air pursued ;
As poised on either moveless wing
He sought his rocky solitude.

Then, pealing from the rifted crag,
A sudden snarling rifle rang !
And on his stately side the stag
Sank quivering in the dying pang.

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O Regicide ! whose murderous play
Hath such a monarch overthrown :
The generous blood you spilled to-day
Was thrice as noble as your own.

Digitized by Google

IN THE KINGDOM OF KERRY

LIKE a lost child, to Kerry's land enchanted
My vagrant thought goes straying evermore :
To the deep dreaming valleys fairy haunted,
The mountains, and the surf-tormented shore
Where I have loved to see the clamorous waves,
From rock to rock their stormy challenge crying,
Sweep thundering through the Skelligs' sounding caves,
And the wild spindrift round their summits flying.

When fervent Day his wanton fires had wasted,
How oft my feet have stirred the dewy brake !
As down Glen Carogh's purple slopes I hasted
To the cool bosom of her lonely lake.

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There with wide arms to cleave its waters chill,
Drawn from Cairn Tual's deepest, holiest fountains:
While the soft fluttering wings of eve grew still,
And the woods darkened round me, and the mountains.

And many a midnight when the Atlantic surges
Sent their complaining voices far inland;
Faint echoes from the tyrant sea that scourges
Those coasts forlorn with unrelenting hand:
I watched the starry pageant of the skies,
Each solemn-eyed, slow-circling constellation;
And heard the western winds' retreating sighs,
And yon deep tones of endless lamentation.

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THE DIVER

Swift arrowy flight through sun-soft air;
Bright kiss of waters crystal cool;
The middle darkness of the pool
Of shadowy monsters half-aware:
Till deafened by the eddying swirl
I waver back to life again,
And yon June heaven's turquoise stain
Far-flecked with plumes of flying pearl.

Ah, joy! to feel the silken wave
Slip softly over breast and side!
And send great billows circling wide,
To flood the vole's grass-hidden cave;
And stir the water-lily's raft
At anchor in yon little bay,
Where points of glittering sapphire play,
And almost wreck that fairy craft.

O beauty of the Day that dies!
O scented airs from mead and wood!
O pleasure of the dancing blood!
As from the river I arise,

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And by its pure embraces seem
Of passion and of care bereft :
A spirit just set free that left
The heavy body in the stream.

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ON THE WELSH COAST

BLIND led by many a friendly star
I hurry through a land of sleep;
For like a trumpet from afar
I heard the challenge of the deep.
And down the cliff's thyme-scented turf
I spring upon the midnight sands.
And strip beside the whispering surf;
And give my body to its hands.

It greets me with a giant glee:
I wrestle in its rough embrace.
The stinging kisses of the sea
Are like a scourge upon my face.
But we, who drink its air divine,
And listen to its endless song,
We love the buffet of the brine
Which makes our thrilling nerves so strong.

Now on a travelling wave adrift,
Supine with idle arms I lie,
And watch the coastwise mountains lift
Their kingly summits to the sky.

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While in the pauses of the breeze
  Mysterious voices call and chide.
For these are Gwalia's faery seas;
  And yonder, Snowdon's haunted side!

Or where her masthead lantern throws
  A quivering shaft upon the dark;
I pass beneath the dipping bows
  Of some belated fishing bark.
I see by that unstable light
  The bearded faces of the crew:
And from the desert of the night
  I answer to their hoarse halloo.

Still onwards, like a child that sleeps
  Locked in a genie's arms, I speed.
Beneath me lie the unfathomed deeps:
  But I no thought of peril heed.
For on that mighty bosom borne,
  And through a world so vast and dim,
With labour and delight outworn
  I almost slumber as I swim.

Till suddenly the stars have fled!
  For now the night is at its noon;
And o'er a misty ocean spread
  The silver footprints of the moon.

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And where that shining pathway gleams
  Athwart the heaving, shimmering main,
A wandering soul whom love redeems
  I turn me to the shore again.

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LOVE THE CONQUEROR

At the shrine of Thy beautiful face
To burn incense I come;
And find, the priest dead in his place,
And the oracle dumb.

Dost Thou think Thy heart hard, as the chain
Of the tyrannous frost?
Dost Thou count Thy soul strong, as the main
By the hurricane tost?

Yet the tide, a tamed tiger, must fawn
At the feet of the moon.
And the stream that was frozen at dawn
Shall be flowing at noon.

And Thou, wilt Thou come like a bride
To the sound of a flute?
Or die, like the passion that died
When the music was mute?

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Aye precious the draught that I crave!
But, how mighty my thirst!
And I ask but a gift that I gave,
When we companied first.

In Thy pride yet a woman Thou art:
And I lowly am man,
And Thy love was ordained for my heart
When our pulses began.

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SCULLING AT MIDNIGHT

A MILE of dusty highway, a grove of clustered beeches,
A darkling furlong down a leafy lane:
And lo! the open valley, the river's shining reaches,
The boathouse, and the abandoned rafts again!
And here my skiff lies waiting, a shallop light and slender,
And strains its tether like a fretting steed.
A steed that frets and wearies for the wings that I shall lend her,
And tugs the cord, impatient to be freed.

Ah, joy of bounding pulses, as the kicking sculls I grip,
And feel the stretcher braced against my feet.
While on my cheek the nightwind lays the coolness of her lip,
With childish kisses innocent and sweet.

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The moon is high in heaven, and from her station throwing
Along the stream a quivering line of light.
And down the central current, so softly, swiftly flowing,
I trace that silver pathway out of sight.

Here are the fields of silence, the broad, deep-bosomed meadows,
Where June lies sleeping like a sleeping child.
I see the soundless zephyr that stirs the poplar shadows;
I hear the myriad voices of the wild.
And o'er those moonlit spaces, and from those pastures vernal,
The breeze comes laden with the bean-flower's breath,
Trefoil and honeysuckle, the gorse's bloom eternal,
And snowy petalled woodruff sweet in death.

And here by darker reaches my noiseless vessel passes,
And dim back-waters full of mystery,
Where strange, shy creatures scurry amid the flowering grasses;
I glimpse them for an instant as they flee.

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Where, patiently awaiting the finny prey he follows,
Silent and swift, the leopard of the stream,
From his sequestered lair among its sandy hollows
The otter's eyes of shining beryl gleam.

The oak tree boughs above me extend their leafy fingers,
Like priestly hands in benediction spread.
But in this green cathedral no sound of music lingers,
And all its hundred choristers are fled.
Sudden, a silver prelude breaks on the woodland hushes
And thrills with passion all the listening vale;
And, as I pause to hearken, from yonder thicket gushes
The mellow fluting of the nightingale.

Till the still earth stirs faintly in her enchanted slumber
And trembles at the impetuous kiss of morn.
Beneath a rosy sunrise that drifted clouds encumber
The misty fields look empty and forlorn.

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And through the whispering twilight, so lovely
and so eerie,
When all night's homeless children seek
their rest ;
I too, her constant lover, with languid wings
and weary,
Return at dawn to my forsaken nest.

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THE GENTLE GHOST

AH, Love! if to-night, in the long dark hours;
The desert that leads from dusk to dawn;
You came, through the tumult of winds and showers,
To the lonely house and the shadowy lawn:
In the hour of release for your gentle ghost;
In the hour when we hope and believe the most;
Though your feet, as they always were, be light,
I should hear you come through the storm to-night.

A clear space breaks in the windy sky;
And cruelly bright the moon looks through!
The tempest ends in its deepest sigh:
The fields are silver with frosty dew.
Now, now, while the day is a sleeping child,
And the tortured world again takes breath;
Come out of your Eden undefiled,
With a gift in your hand, of life or death!

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VERSES ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS

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NUNC DIMITTIS

(January 1901)

SLEEP, Lady! for the hour of peace
That comes to all has come to Thee;
And welcome was the late release
That set the weary prisoner free.
For Thou, from sun to sun hast reigned;
Thy name is borne on every breath.
A single priceless boon remained:
The last and greatest gift of Death.

So long the tired traveller dreamed
Of her far journey's joyful end,
That yon imperious summons seemed
The gentle whisper of a friend.
By duty bound to heavy state,
Whence all the old delight had fled,
How did her anxious soul await
The call of her beloved dead.

For still a gentle soul she bore,
Too tender for her royal part;
And the more calm her brow, the more
In secret bled the woman's heart.

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But her so sorely tortured breast
Had such a heavenly patience learned,
That scarce her nearest kindred guessed
How sharp the hidden anguish burned.

And she shall have a nobler grave,
A fairer and a grander tomb,
Than England once to Henry gave,
In the great Minster's central gloom.
Though all the seas of all the world
Have her uncounted triumphs seen;
No pomp of captured flags unfurled
May fitly canopy our Queen.

The daughter of a hundred kings,
And yet a true Republican,
She left all care of meaner things,
To serve and to ennoble man.
So let our cunning artists rear
What pompous cenotaph they will;
The hearts that hold her memory dear
Are her eternal dwelling still.

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OUTWARD BOUND

(President M'Kinley. Sept. 14, 1901)

FAREWELL! For now a stormy morn and dark
The hour of greeting and of parting brings;
Already on a rising wind yon bark
Spreads her impatient wings.

Too hasty keel, a little while delay!
A moment tarry, O thou hurrying dawn!
For long and sad will be the mourner's day
When their beloved is gone.

But vain the hands that beckon from the shore:
Alike our passion and our grief are vain.
Behind him lies our little world, Before
The illimitable main.

Yet, none the less, about his moving bed
Immortal eyes a tireless vigil keep—
An angel at the feet and at the head
Guard his untroubled sleep.

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Two nations bowed above a common bier,
  Made one forever by a martyred son:
One in their agony of hope and fear,
  And in their sorrow one.

And Thou, lone Traveller of a waste so wide,
  The uncharted seas that all must pass in turn,
May the same star that was so long thy guide
  O'er thy last voyage burn.

No eye can reach where through yon sombre veil
  That bark to its eternal haven fares;
No earthly breezes swell its shadowy sail;
  Only our love and prayers.

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TO QUEEN ALEXANDRA

(February 1906)

Not for thy Father fallen on quiet sleep,
In his grey palace by the northern sea;
Not for thy happy Sire doth England weep:
She grieves for thee!

For thee, not yon old warrior we grieve,
Whose long life had such sudden, gentle end.
For Death to him, in the first hour of eve,
Came as a Friend:

Folded the terrors of his sombre wing:
Laid the white head upon his mighty breast:
And like a tired child the soldier King
Went to his rest.

Comfort ere long thy mourning soul shall know,
And check its bitterer grief; but not to-day.
The tears that from so deep a sorrow flow
Must have their way.

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And as thou standest by that stately bier,
In grey Roskilde by the winter sea,
The hundred million hearts that hold thee dear
Are all with thee.

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THE ARCHBISHOP OF BELGRADE

He raised his reverend hands to Heaven, and blessed
The kneeling murderers with unfaltering tongue:
The robes of peace he wore, and on his breast
The golden sign of our redemption hung.

From those calm skies no sudden lightnings broke:
Justice awhile her righteous doom delayed;
And underneath the cloud of incense smoke
The assassins still knelt, smiling, unafraid.

Yet these were they whose coward hands had wrought
The foulest act that stains our later time;
And reeking from their work they came and sought
Their Primate's benediction on that crime.

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For though no flaming scourge their guilt chastise,
And unavenged yon helpless victims bleed;
Though Servia's folk look on with alien eyes,
And some approve, and all condone, the deed:

These pious souls desire one sanction more,
And, ill-content, for holier warrant yearn—
The Church must praise her servants' zeal before
Untroubled peace may to their hearts return.

And so in Belgrade's minster, yesterday,
A priest of Christ those midnight murderers blessed;
And Christ's own cross upon his bosom lay,
And left no brand upon the traitor's breast.

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LEO THE PEACEMAKER

SCARCE hath he passed unto his rest
That was so hard to win:
Already round his tranquil breast
The busy scribes begin.

And I, who in an alien tongue
Would praise yon saintly man;
I, from unbending fathers sprung,
English and Puritan;

Grieve for that Voice whose tender tone,
Unmixed with priestly guile,
Still sounded like his Master's own,
To heal and reconcile.

Not once, nor twice, in that long life,
His gently spoken word
Composed the internecine strife
That restless spirits stirred.

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Still in his brother's cause he fought
That baser wars might cease.
Peace all those strenuous years he sought;
So let him rest in peace.

Vain are our deeds of sword and song,
Whatever name they bear:
Hero and hero-bard, ere long,
The same oblivion share.

Yet, as a withered rose, 'tis said,
Laid on St. Francis' tomb,
Renewed its vanished tints, and spread
Into a second bloom:

Even so, of all my fading sheaf
One transient bud to save,
I lay this flower of love and grief
Upon Pope Leo's grave.

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FIVE DIALECT POEMS

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A SONG OF SOMERSET

EAST, west, where fortune leads I follow,
And take my chance of dry or wet.
But faithful as the homing swallow
I still come back to Somerset.
Some folks at will their bonds can sever ;
But I have loved one home too long ;
And in my heart I hear for ever
Yon out o' mind w'old-vashioned song :
"I niver, niver can vurget
I vurst dra'ed breath in Zummerset."

There flowers our own sweet apple-blossom :
There the wide-spreading orchards be,
That stretch from Mendip's rocky bosom
Down to the golden Severn sea.
A land of many a village nestling
Each in its little, shady combe.
Where lads are strong for work or wrestling,
And maidens like a rose in bloom :
Ah, luckless he who never met
A rose-red maid o' Somerset !

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There Bath with guardian hills surrounded
Lies lovely as a sleeping queen;
Wells by her ring of towers bounded;
And Taunton 'mid her verdant Dene.
And there, where Saxon monks made merry
And Dunstan twisted Satan's tail,
The ruined walls of Glastonbury
Rise from the fields of Polden vale.
Town after town like jewels set
In the fair crown of Somerset.

Fair winds, free way, for Youth, the rover;
We all must share the curse o' Cain!
But bring me back when youth is over
To the old crooked shire again.
Aye, bring me back in life's declining
To the one home that's home for me;
Where in the west the sunset shining
Goes down into the Severn sea.
And let my dying eyes be set
On the dear hills of Somerset!

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PARSON'S NAG

O Parson's Nag! O Parson's Nag!
Whut makes 'ee grow zo fat?
Whoy! feeding in the Parson's stall;
'Tis main good feeding that!
Zo well as he loves sarmon time,
He loveth dinner bell!
But he al'ays zees my manger vull
Afore he dines himzell!

O Parson's Nag! O Parson's Nag!
Whut makes 'ee go zo slow?
Whoy! him as carries Parson Biggs
Mun vair and softly go.
For if I tries a trot, thee zees,
Whop overhead he goes!
And who be I, 'ould loike to know,
To vlatten Parson's nose?

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O Parson's Nag! O Parson's Nag!
Whut makes ee get zo gray?
Whoy! zame as grizzles Parson's hair:
The fret of every day!
The horse or man as does his work,
My measter oft has said,
W'old Time will lay a zilver crown
Of honour on his head.

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EDEN GARDEN

There's a dream that comes when daylight's
dying,
And the noisy craws are homewards flying ;
When the tews and toils of day are ended,
The maids abed, and the cattle tended ;
And I watch the vields grow dim and dimmer
In summer sunset's fading glimmer,
While to and fro the bats go flitting
About the porch where I be sitting.

And there i' th' dusk I smoke and ponder,
Till forth on the wings of my dream I
wander,
Zims as some gentle sperrit bore me
To where my child has gone before me.
Full forty years their tale have written
On my brow by sin and sorrow smitten ;
But her white soul hath won my pardon,
And opened the geates of Eden Garden.

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Oh! Eden Garden's all a-flower,
By angels made for a childern's bower;
And our lost little ones go thither,—
Flowers of the spring that bloom and wither!
Smiling they go, with happy faces.
For there's no more death in those vair places;
No more weeping and no more crying
For summer over and sweet things dying.

And there the childless women waken:
The maids unloved, and the maids forsaken;
The buds that never came to blossom;
The empty lap and the barren bosom.
For there the Lord o' th' place hath set them
Among the babies, to kiss and pet them.
Their hearts are light; they call to each other;
And every one is a happy mother.

Droo Eden Garden I go straying:
All in the midst o' th' pretty playing.
And I'm lost among a world o' childern:
They pull me, they tug me, 'tis fair bewilderin'!

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Till sudden, I hear my Janey's laughter;
Bird alone! but a cry comes after.
Oh! my hungry arms are wide and ready;
But she sees me first, and springs to her
Daddy!

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THE WIDOWER

(North Somerset)

THE men and maids they do agree :
  Each one is happy with his own.
Time was things went the zame wi' me :
  But now I'm bound to bide alone.
To bide alone in this w'old house ;
  Where all the weary, weary year,
The chiking of the wainscot mouse
  Is all the music I do hear.

Whiles I forget, as fellows will :
  And special upo' market days.
The heart is out of life, but still
  I follows in the w'old-vashioned ways.
And once a week, come shine or rain,
  I teake the gig, and rattle down,
To meet the neighbour chaps again,
  And hear the jingles of the town.

" Vaine marnin', Zur ! " the volks do cry,
  And grip my hands wi' smarmy smiles.
A middling warmish man be I ;
  And that's enough for Jack and Giles.

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I shows my carn, and makes my sale,
  And gives good-day and gets the news.
And then 'tis " Zur ! a cup of ale !
  Vor sartin, zur, you 'ont refuse ! "

But ridin' home when market's done ;
  When drenched wi' dew the midders lie ;
And the first stars come one by one
  To quiver in the primrose sky ;
I mind when She was by my side,
  And nestled underneath my arm,
And ne'er a whisper till we spied
  The twinkling lights o' Chantry Farm.

And when the long, long evening wears,
  And I am for my lonely bed,
And droo the hush I hear the stairs
  Crick-crackin' to my heavy tread,
A silent shadder goes before
  In trailing, misty garments dressed ;
The very robe my darling wore ;
  And holds a baby to her breast.

It feels her bosom's gentle stir :
  Its head is pillowed on her heart ;
The pretty babe that died with her,
  And never drew a breath apart !

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Mother and child how fair they seem !
Yet long ago with God they be ;
And this is but a fleeting dream :
But oh ! 'tis all the world to me.

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THE END OF THE LONG JOURNEY

(North Somerset)

JOHN SANDERSON was dying,
In summer, on Mendip-side,
In the cottage where his father,
And father's father, died.

And dying has grown so common,
And old men are so cheap;
There was only the parish doctor
To see him off to sleep.

And he thought he would last till morning,
And left him in neighbour's care;
The tavern was terribly handy—
Death came when none was there.

But he welcomed the awful Stranger
With a smile of wrinkled joy,
And only patiently sighing,
"I'd like for to see my boy:

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The lad as runned from the village
A mort o' years ago,
And went to Bristow and listed,
And left me the weeds to hoe.

Couldn't un vight and wrussle?
Couldn't un whistle and sing?
The maids a could smarm and 'viggle';
The lads a could hold and fling."

Sweet scent of the sad sweet-briar
Came in from the garden bed;
And he heard the wicket rattle,
And he heard the sound of a tread,

That rang on the stony threshold,
And woke the sleeping cat:
And the gleam of a scarlet tunic,—
The dying eyes saw that;

And the tall man in the doorway,
Against the sunset, black.
And far too old to be fearful,
He said, "My boy's come back!"

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And groping with feeble fingers,
" My eyen be cruel dim,
I wants to see thy veace, lad !
Come here to thy vaither, Jim !

Th'st a ribbin in button-hole, Jimmy,
Wi' a star as shines zo vine.
And summat of iron ' For Valour,'—
Be all they whimsies thine ? "

A strong arm lifted his shoulders.
A brown hand settled his head.
" We'm quality now, for sartin,"
He, tittering weakly, said.

And so, on the breast of scarlet,
Between the cross and the star,
The old man lay, as he waited
To pass the utmost bar.

But while his fleet soul fluttered,
And strove to die and live ;
The lips behind him whispered
The hoarse words, " Father, forgive."

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And out of the thronging shadows,
The answer faltered, "No,
Not now, dear lad; I done it
A mort o' years ago."

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Poems of France not won by war" ever felt again nearly came off.

93 Comment on note

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